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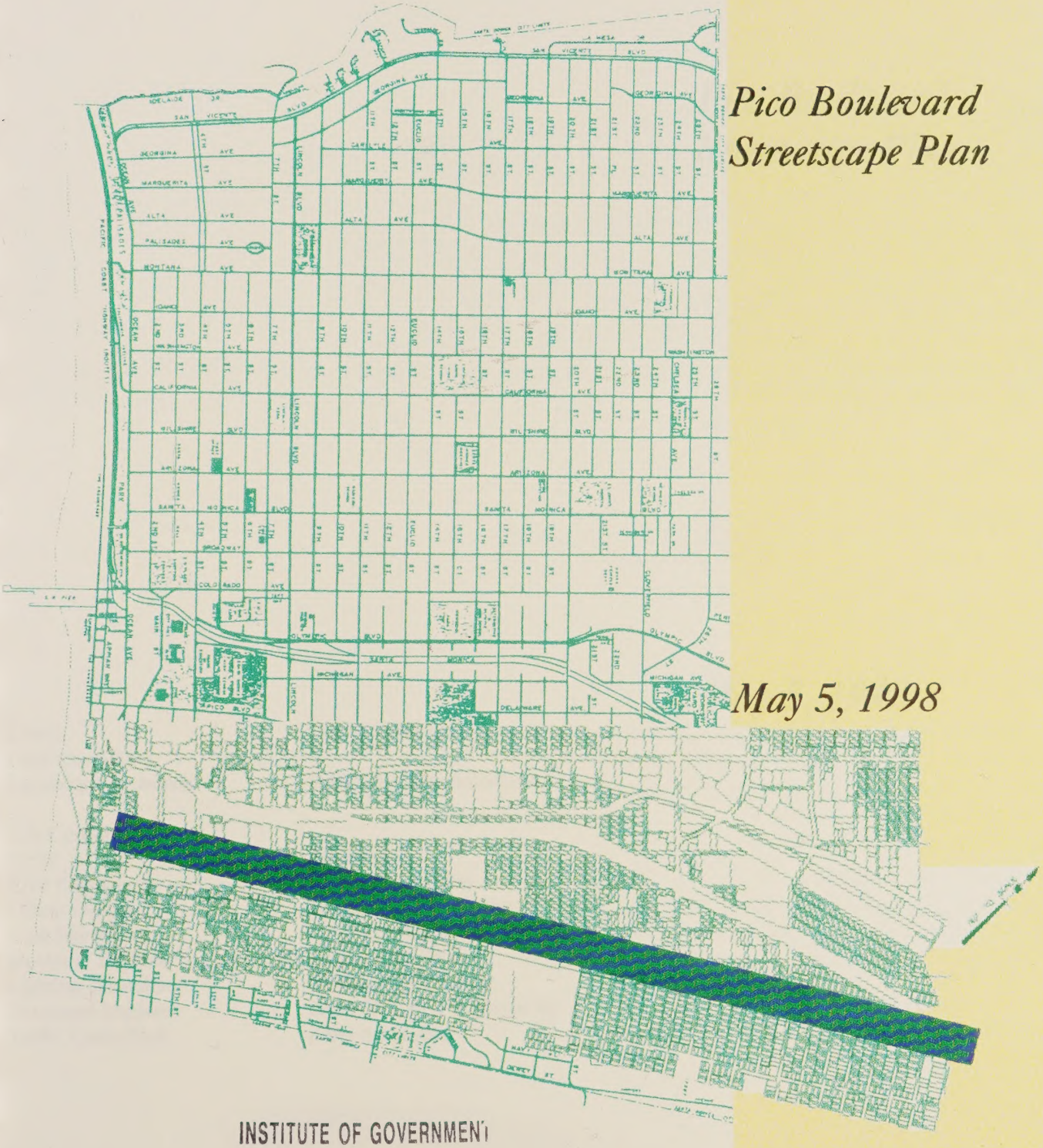
The City of Santa Monica

Pico Boulevard Streetscape Plan



May 5, 1998

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The City of Santa Monica

Pico Boulevard Streetscape Plan

May 5, 1998

Client:	City of Santa Monica
Lead Consultant	
Landscape Architect:	Katherine Spitz Associates
Sub-Consultants	
Artist:	Sheila Klein
Civil Engineers:	Psomas Associates
Urban Design:	Suisman Urban Design
Cost Estimator:	Adamson Associates
Electrical Engineer:	Cohen Associates
Lighting Consultant:	Horton Lees Lighting
Structural Engineer:	Ishler Design & Engineering
Traffic Consultant:	Kaku Associates

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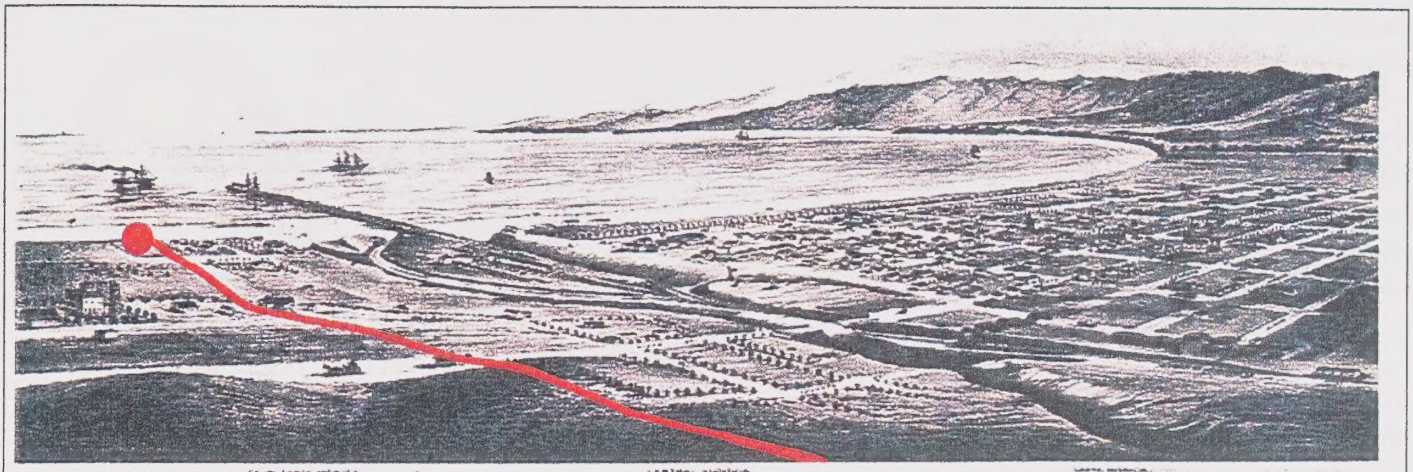
Introduction



Pico Boulevard

In 1994, the City of Santa Monica contracted with the consulting firm of Public Works Design to establish a preliminary streetscape design scheme for Pico Boulevard. The project area includes the entire length of Pico Boulevard within the City, from Ocean Avenue to Centinela Avenue. Through a community process involving a series of focus group meetings with various neighborhood and business groups and a community wide workshop, a preliminary plan was developed which included improvements to the Pico Boulevard transit stops, new street trees, improved lighting and area entry features. Following the formation of the preliminary plan, the City contracted with Katherine Spitz Associates to finalize the streetscape plan and to prepare construction drawings for the implementation of the plan.

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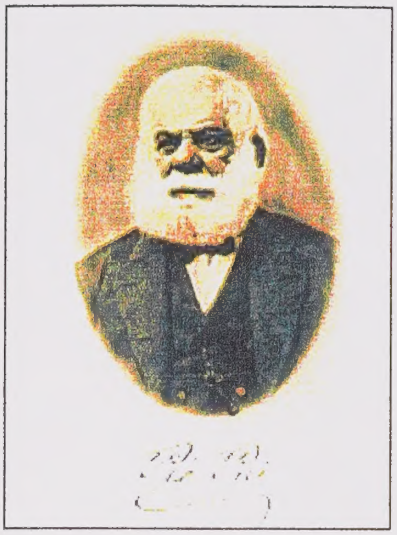
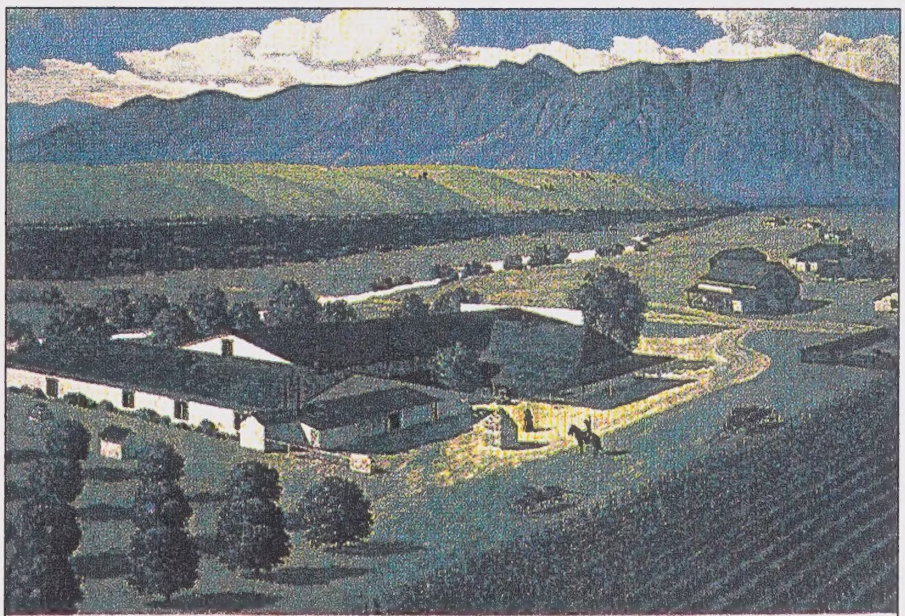
History

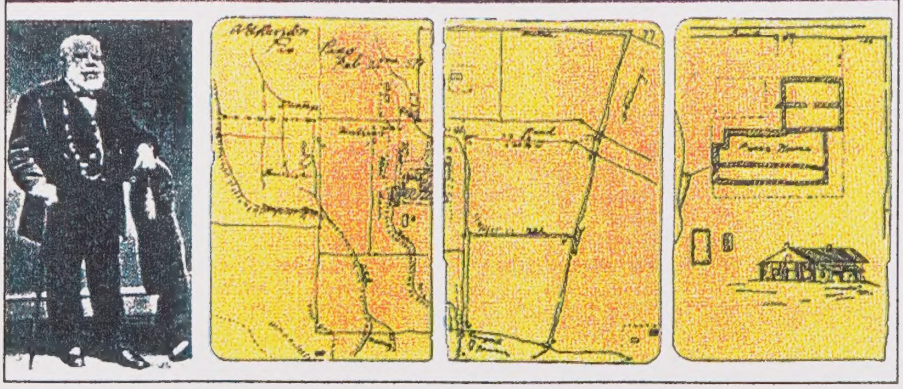


Before the City of Santa Monica was an American city, the street we now call Pico Boulevard was merely the empty land which divided two Spanish land grants - Rancho de la Ballona and Rancho de Santa Monica y San Vicente. This division can be seen in the different street grids north and south of the street.

One of the goals of this streetscape plan is to suggest the landscape of the ranchos, using hedgerows to recall the windbreaks used in the early agricultural fields of Southern California



In the 1950s, Pico Boulevard was widened to accommodate additional cars. As a result of that street widening, the existing street trees were removed and the sidewalk was narrowed to its current width of six to eight feet. As a result, the boulevard became an inhospitable street for pedestrians.



In the 1970s, a tree planting program was initiated through the efforts of the community. A mix of Loquat, Brisbane Box, Melaleuca, Magnolia, and Evergreen Pear were planted. A few of these trees have flourished, but most appear to be in decline.

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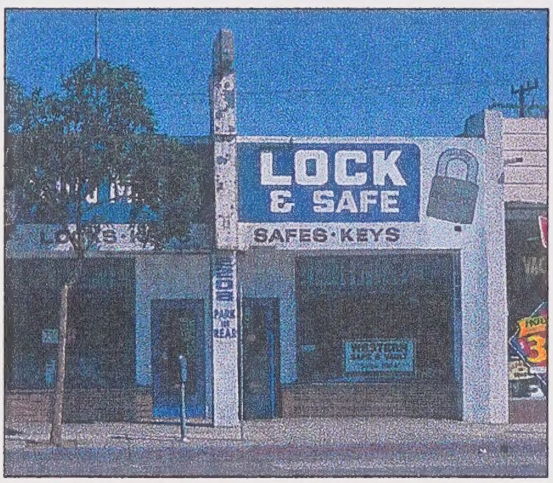
Existing Conditions



Character of Pico Boulevard

The master plan described Pico Boulevard as a good example of a "metropolitan boulevard." It also is one of the five major streets which run on a east/west axis in Santa Monica and link the ocean at one end of the street with the City of Los Angeles at the other. The street itself has several distinct topographical conditions - steep hills at 12th Street and again west of Lincoln Boulevard and a long flat plateau at Santa Monica College. A mix of uses occurs along the street, institutional, commercial and residential. While there is little to unify the street aesthetically, it is a well traveled street. It is the transit spine for the Santa Monica Big Blue Bus, and the front door of Santa Monica College. The street is an important arterial in the city's traffic grid, a route to the freeway, beach, and the city beyond.

Current Conditions

The overall appearance of Pico Boulevard is degraded by the lack of greenery, the broad eighty foot expanse of the roadway, poor pedestrian lighting, and unadorned transit stops. The streetscape design will capitalize on the variety and liveliness which exists on the street, while providing a consistent visual framework of trees and paving to strengthen its identity.

Naturalizing the Boulevard

The great and beautiful streets of the world are a composition of well proportioned architecture and sidewalks, majestic street trees, and lights which illuminate the environment in a pleasing way. The Pico Boulevard streetscape plan will take advantage of the street's existing strengths and build upon them.

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Street Trees

New London Plane (Platanus acerifolia) trees have been chosen as the street tree for Pico Boulevard. They are tall, fast growing and of a scale appropriate to the nature and size of Pico Boulevard.

The Plane tree grows to a height of 30'-50', with a canopy that is 20' to 30' wide. Their canopies can be pruned up as they grow, so that eventually the branching starts at 9' to 13' feet above the sidewalk. The tree is deciduous. It is a relative of the California sycamore (Platanus racemosa) but it grows straighter, and with a symmetrical canopy. It is used as a street tree throughout the world. The trees will be planted 30' to 35' between parking meters along Pico within new planting areas.

The new street trees, irrigated to promote long, vigorous growth, are the primary element of this project. New trees will be planted between the few particularly healthy street trees currently on Pico - for example, the London Plane Trees will be planted between the Melaleuca trees in front of Santa Monica High School.

The London Plane Tree has been selected because they will allow visibility for storefront signage under their canopy. Merchants will not need to shorten trees to allow their signs to be seen above the canopy, rather, signage will be visible below the canopy.

The trees will provide a tall edge to Pico, which will mimic the proportions of a classic street and give the street the perception of being an outdoor room.

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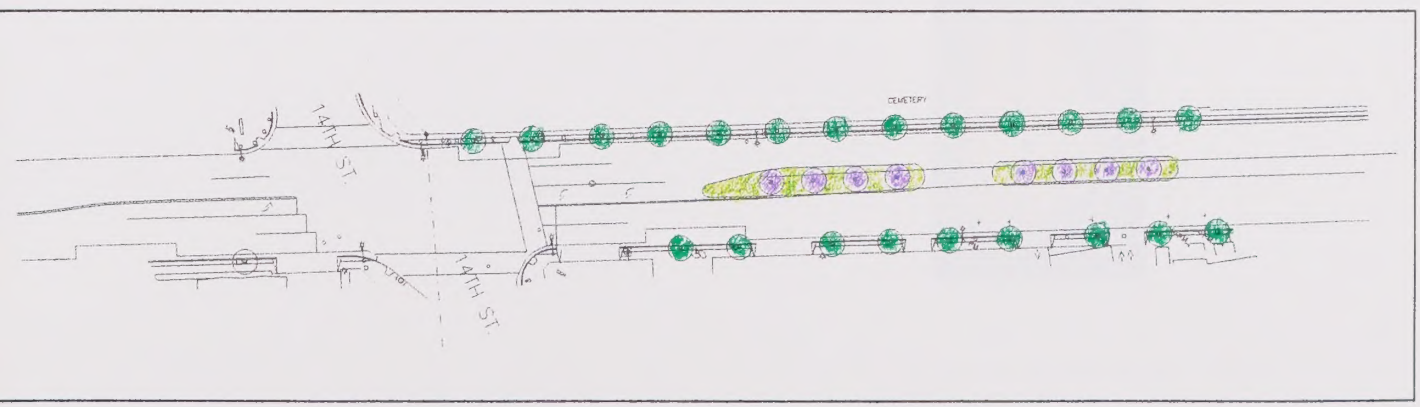
Medians

The enormous glaring expanse of asphalt roadbed that exists on Pico Boulevard will be modulated with the addition of new 5' wide medians. The medians will occur intermittantly along the Boulevard and they will not affect current traffic patterns.

The medians will be planted with trees and shrubs. The preferred choice for the median trees are Jacaranda. This species of trees has been used as street trees in other parts of the City. Jacarandas are notoriously beautiful in May when they flower, and will be well placed in the median, where flower drop will not cause slipping or staining.

Native California shrubs will be planted in the medians. The shrubs such as Mountain Lilac (Ceanothus), Bearberry (Arctostaphylos species), Agave, and Sages (Salvia species) need no irrigation water once established and very little care. They will contribute to the sustainable character of the design.



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Pedestrian Lights

Adding new pedestrian lighting at appropriate locations on Pico Boulevard will enhance the comfort level of pedestrians and motorists on the street. The current cobra head lights are designed first and foremost to provide adequate lighting for the roadbed and they are not designed to light the sidewalk. The addition of light which purposefully lights the sidewalk itself, will create a welcoming feeling and allow Pico Boulevard businesses and users to feel more secure enjoying the use of the street in the evening.

The pedestrian lights are composed of one or two reflectors designed as a leaf shaped object which strengthens the metaphor of greening the Boulevard. The leaf shaped reflectors are mounted on 10′ poles with an integrated light source. These reflectors capture and spread the light toward the sidewalk in a glow. The effect will be of a unifying, repeating streetscape element viewed by drivers and pedestrians.

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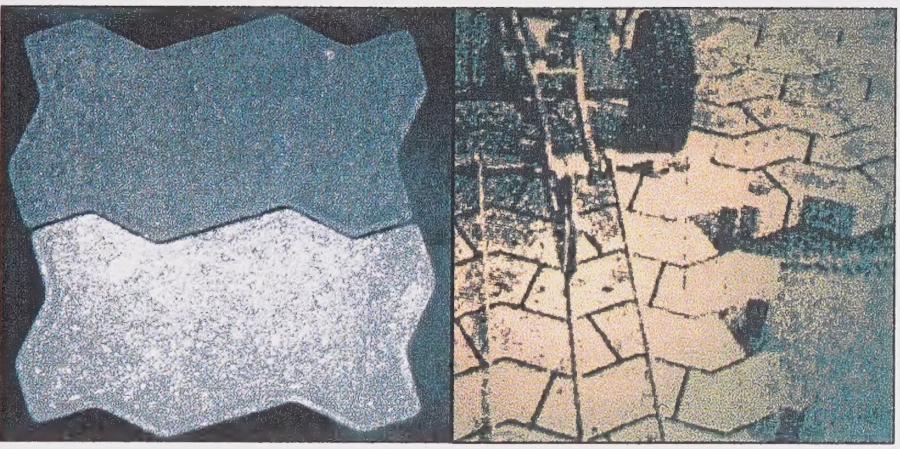
Sidewalk Flow Timeline



1849 80,000 PEOPLE FROM THE UNITED STATES ARRIVE IN CALIFORNIA TO SEEK GOLD
1875 RAILROAD PASSENGER TICKETS FROM LOS ANGELES TO SANTA MONICA COST $1.00

Sidewalk Flow

In order to install new trees, and new electrical and water lines, the sidewalk will need to be cut. This creates an opportunity to install new paving with a unifying pattern that will strengthen Pico's identity and unify the street.

The new paving has been designed as a 30" inch wide band of sand set pavers. Practically, these pavers make repair of the sidewalk easy because they can be lifted out by hand and replaced. They also will allow rain water to percolate through the pavers, reducing the water flow to the Santa Monica City storm drains, and strengthening the sustainability of the overall streetscape design.

We have called this paving pattern, composed of dark gray and pale gray concrete pavers, the Flow. It is a reminder of the flow of water from the higher topography of 30th Street to the beach at the termination of the Boulevard.

Timeline

The preliminary plan for the Boulevard included the history of Pio Pico in text form along the Boulevard. This history has been expanded to become a time collage describing various environmental, historical, botanical, cultural and regional events which have shaped all of Santa Monica history. This time collage will take the form of text set into concrete pavers within the Flow.

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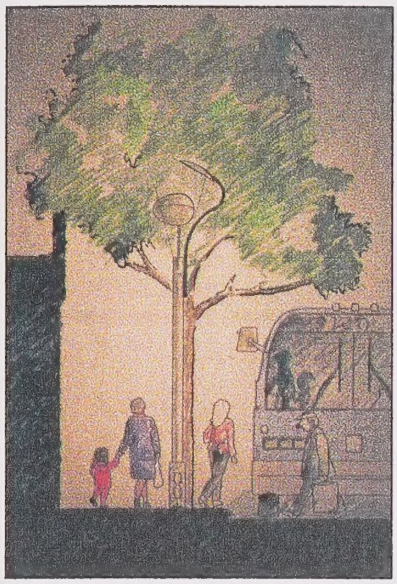
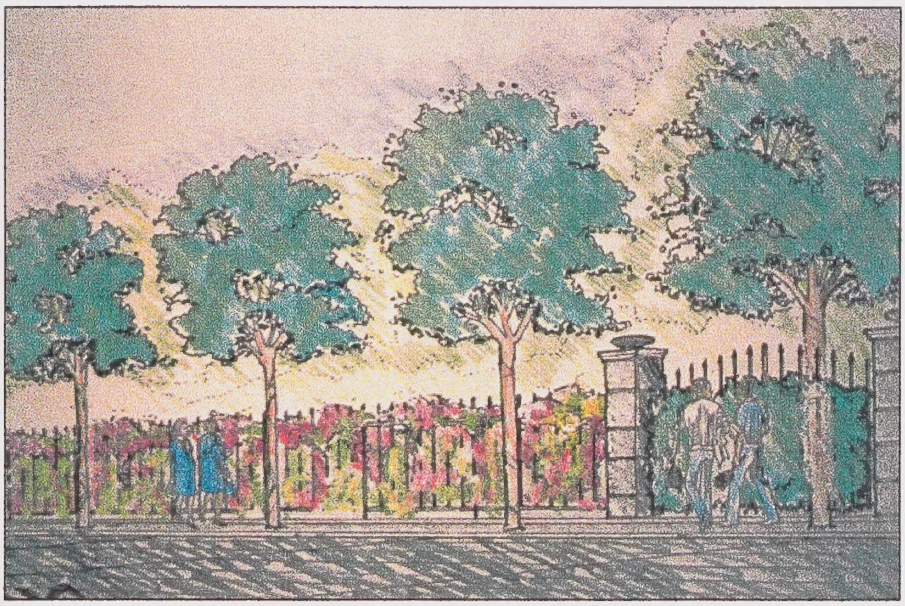
Bus Stops
Cemetery Fence





Bus Stops

The bus stops on Pico form a strong rhythm for the streetscape improvements. Each bus stop will be improved to include a pedestrian light and bus furniture, including benches, trash receptacles and signage as well as parts of the timeline text.

Cemetery Fence

The current condition of the cemetery fence adds to the neglected atmosphere on both Pico Boulevard and the cemetery. Meetings with Woodlawn user groups indicated a need for privacy for visitors to the cemetery. The plan calls for a new chainlink fence to be planted with flowering vines to provide privacy for the cemetery users. The fence will be screened while the vines are growing.

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Gateway Element

The 10 Freeway at Pico marks the boundary between Los Angeles and Santa Monica. The gateway feature is designed using trees of light to transform the bleak and dreary underpass into a sparkling, engaging event.

Working closely with Caltrans, the gateway will respond to the practical concerns of traffic safety and maintenance, while subtly stengthening the identity of Pico Boulevard.

This piece was inspired by the architecture and arcades of the early beach Hotels in Santa Monica, and by the tunnel at Pacific Coast Tunnel. One passes through the tunnel, from the urban grayness, into the bright sky and sand of the beach.

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